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STAMFORD HARBOR, CONNECTICUT

P46-5

HEARINGS

ON THE SUBJECT
OF THE

IMPROVEMENT OF STAMFORD HARBOR CONNECTICUT

HELD BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBORS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SIXTY-FIFTH CONGRESS

CONSISTING OF

JOHN H. SMALL, North Carolina, *Chairman*.

CHARLES F. BOOHER, Missouri.
THOMAS GALLAGHER, Illinois.
THOMAS J. SCULLY, New Jersey.
SAMUEL M. TAYLOR, Arkansas.
H. GARLAND DUPRÉ, Louisiana.
MARTIN DIES, Texas.
OSCAR L. GRAY, Alabama.
GEORGE K. DENTON, Indiana.
HUBERT F. FISHER, Tennessee.

CHARLES A. KENNEDY, Iowa.
ROBERT M. SWITZER, Ohio.
JAMES A. FREAR, Wisconsin.
DOW H. DRUKKER, New Jersey.
PETER E. COSTELLO, Pennsylvania.
S. WALLACE DEMPSEY, New York.
HENRY I. EMERSON, Ohio.
HENRY Z. OSBORNE, California.
RICHARD P. FREEMAN, Connecticut.

JANUARY 19, 1918



WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1918

STAMFORD HARBOR, CONNECTICUT.

COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBORS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D. C., Saturday, January 19, 1918.

The committee this day met, Hon. John H. Small (chairman) presiding.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order. Gentlemen, Mr. Merritt is here with some other gentlemen to present a matter to the committee, in connection with the improvement at Stamford. Mr. Merritt, you may proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. SCHULYER MERRITT, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT.

Mr. MERRITT. Mr. Chairman, this relates to the improvement of the harbor of the city of Stamford. The former project was completed in 1911, and that project was a continuation of private work, which had been done by private enterprise in the city of Stamford. There are on both sides of the harbor, on the east branch and on the west branch, railway tracks connecting with trunk lines——

The CHAIRMAN. What is the project you are speaking of, Mr. Merritt?

Mr. MERRITT. I am presenting the project, sir, which was recommended to this committee in a letter from the Secretary of War in 1914. I have it with me.

The CHAIRMAN. Give the stenographer the number of it.

Mr. MERRITT. No. 1130.

The CHAIRMAN. House Document 1130, Sixty-third Congress, second session.

Mr. MERRITT. That is right, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. The members will find the existing project discussed on page 195 of the Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers.

Mr. MERRITT. I do not need, Mr. Chairman, to take the time of the committee to go into details, because those are all set forth in a letter to the Secretary of War, which I take it the committee will examine at their convenience. I will merely say that the importance of the harbor is indicated by the fact that in the last report of the Chief of Engineers for the year 1916 the water-borne commerce is given as \$22,000,000. Stamford, like many Connecticut towns, has grown tremendously in the last two or three years, and there have been important industries established there, connected with chemistry and with war, as well as the ordinary manufacturing which is carried on in Connecticut.

Now, the particular importance, it seems to me, of the harbor of Stamford is because it is at the very throat of New England. That

is to say, no railroad freight can possibly get into New England from New York except through Stamford, which is the only connection, and one which can not be enlarged, because all the way from New York it is a thickly settled country, so that practically the railroad facilities which now exist are as much as can be had, so it is extremely important to relieve that congestion.

Now, the present project provides only for a depth of 9 feet in the east harbor, and as the barges carrying coal increase in size, it decreases the possibility of getting those barges into the harbor, because they will not come when the water is so shallow, on account of the possibility of having to lie in the mud, or possibly hitting on a rock.

That really is the whole question. It depends on what principle of action this committee adopts, whether it is worth while to start on this project for Stamford. If you believe in relieving the railway situation in New England, this is the proper place to start. If you do not, I am not asking any special consideration for Stamford as opposed to any other place.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, enlarge on that, Mr. Merritt. You say it is important. Why?

Mr. MERRITT. It is important, sir, because, in my view, it is important to relieve the railways of all this heavy, bulky freight which can be carried by water, and Stamford being only 30 miles from New York, it is an ideal place to begin that relief. It is true that that is a fact all along the sound, but Stamford is the first commodious harbor after leaving New York, on the Connecticut shore, on the shore where the New Haven Railroad operates. Therefore, it seems to me, it is very important to make that harbor at least of the depth as pointed out in the report of the engineers, so that when the Erie Canal comes to be used, the barges which navigate in that canal, and which will require a depth of 12 feet, shall be able to get into that harbor. I think that is the chief point.

Mr. BOOHER. Mr. Merritt, why do the engineers in this report recommend that the channel in the east branch shall be 12 feet in depth and in the west branch only 9 feet in depth?

Mr. MERRITT. You will find, if you will read further, that the reason for that is that in the east branch there is a muddy bottom, and in the west branch it is underlaid by rock in many places, which would make it extremely expensive. As a matter of fact, the east branch has borne the bulk of the commerce. There are two branches, like the prongs of a tooth, so to speak, coming into the main part of the harbor. One branch runs one way and the other the other.

I think that is all I need to say, Mr. Chairman, unless some gentleman wishes to ask any further questions. It is really a matter of policy for the committee.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Merritt, the committee, you understand, feel it incumbent upon them to restrict this bill as much as possible.

Mr. MERRITT. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Suppose you enlarge your statement upon the necessity of adopting this project now, instead of waiting; in other words, the reasons for the urgent necessity of adopting it now.

Mr. MERRITT. Well, Mr. Chairman, I do not know that I can say anything further on that subject, other than the fact of the general

urgency of relieving railway congestion, which is very great in New England, as you all know. There has been embargo after embargo on freight, and you can not get a pound of freight up from New York, many times, except by water.

The CHAIRMAN. That is quite appropriate.

Mr. MERRITT. And, as I say, any relief at the throat of that great New England system, it seems to me, is going to improve the circulation of the whole system, obviously. I do not think any argument needs to be made to show that. If you gentlemen will get that in your minds that the whole rail system of New England comes together and flows through this narrow throat into the State of New York you will perceive the great necessity of keeping that throat clear.

Mr. FREAR. What percentage of coal going up north of New York takes this course that is needed up in New England, say up in Massachusetts?

Mr. MERRITT. Some of the eastern New England coal and the northern New England coal comes by rail over the Poughkeepsie Bridge. I think all the southern New England coal, as a rule, comes by rail to New York and then is taken to New England either by barge or rail shipments.

Mr. FREAR. Does all that pass through Stamford, or does some of it keep outside to Boston?

Mr. MERRITT. Some of the barge and vessel coal for eastern points goes through the sound direct from New York, but the railroad coal all goes through Stamford. They are now using the Pennsylvania tunnel coming under the North River, and under the East River, and over the Hell Gate Bridge, which perhaps you are familiar with.

Mr. FREAR. A railroad is through there?

Mr. MERRITT. They now connect with the Pennsylvania Railroad, so that they do not have to take to water, but all such coal goes through Stamford, because the Harlem River branch of the New Haven road connects with the Pennsylvania road, and that at New Rochelle comes into the main line, which goes through Stamford.

Mr. FREAR. Is Stamford a receiving point, or simply a distributing point?

Mr. MERRITT. Largely a receiving point, but something of a distributing point also. Lumber comes in there and is distributed from there up through the western part of the State.

Mr. FREAR. I see that the population of the city is stated here to be 25,000 people. You say it is perhaps greater than that now? Is it more than 25,000 people now?

Mr. MERRITT. I have the census that I received from the State capitol the other day, and not in connection with this case at all, so they were not trying to swell it, giving the population as 35,000. It has increased very rapidly in the last four or five years.

Mr. FREAR. Do you have any boat line operating around Stamford and supplying, for instance, the needs of the country for coal and all that sort of thing?

Mr. MERRITT. This town of Stamford, Conn., occupies, if you gentlemen remember the map of Connecticut, a little throat that sticks out into New York, and all that country which runs about 8 miles

north of the sound is supplied by Stamford. It is a very thickly populated region.

Mr. OSBORNE. You consume an immense amount of coal there, do you not, in manufacturing plants?

Mr. MERRITT. Yes; we do.

Mr. OSBORNE. How much money do you ask?

Mr. MERRITT. This project calls for \$183,000.

Mr. DEMPSEY. Would that give you a depth so that the coal barges could come in there?

Mr. MERRITT. Yes, sir; that would give 12 feet at low water.

Mr. DEMPSEY. That would be enough so as to enable the coal barges to come in there?

Mr. MERRITT. Yes. The average rise is about 5 or 6 feet.

Mr. DUPRE. Was this harbor covered in the bill that failed of passage in the Sixty-fourth Congress, second session?

Mr. MERRITT. I do not think so.

Mr. FREAR. Have you any public wharves there at Stamford?

Mr. MERRITT. None that belong to the municipality; no, sir.

Mr. FREAR. Why not?

Mr. MERRITT. There is a project of that sort under way. The city does own considerable wharf frontage on the east side, and there is a very strong movement now to have that made into public wharves, on the east branch. The city needs a place there for a pumping station, and had just bought considerable new frontage. I believe that there will be a public wharf there.

Mr. FREAR. The report states they are all private wharves, exclusively owned.

Mr. MERRITT. Yes, that is true. There is a wharf which is practically a public wharf now. Although it is privately owned, it is not in private use, and anybody that wants to come there can come. There is, in the sense that you have in mind, sir, no public wharf as yet.

The CHAIRMAN. Would there be any objection, if the committee should adopt this project, to make a condition that municipal terminals should be constructed satisfactory to the Chief of Engineers, or provision made for their construction?

Mr. MERRITT. Using the railway connections? Would that be what is in your mind? That is practicable. Personally, I believe in the principle, Mr. Chairman, if you are asking me as a citizen. I am not authorized to represent the community in that respect, but I think I would entirely approve of that principle.

The CHAIRMAN. An adequate water terminal should have a belt line connecting it with the railroad?

Mr. MERRITT. Yes, sir. We have, in fact, railroads on both sides of the east branch, and on one side of the west branch.

The CHAIRMAN. It would be very little trouble to connect them up with your terminal?

Mr. MERRITT. I think so.

The CHAIRMAN. What information can you give us, Mr. Merritt, as to the established water transportation lines; say with New York?

Mr. MERRITT. Well, there is a daily steamboat line that runs always one boat one way each day, and in times of stress two boats.

The CHAIRMAN. Between Stamford and what point?

Mr. MERRITT. New York.

The CHAIRMAN. Are there any steamboat lines running further east?

Mr. MERRITT. From Stamford?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. MERRITT. No, sir, the whole connection of Stamford is with New York. It is practically a part of the manufacturing district of New York.

The CHAIRMAN. Is this an established steamboat line which operates its boats upon a regular schedule?

Mr. MERRITT. Oh, yes, sir, and has been for years, and has never failed.

The CHAIRMAN. I see by the records that the water commerce at Stamford for 1916 was 401,359 tons, with a valuation of more than \$22,000,000.

Mr. MERRITT. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Gentlemen, Mr. Merritt is presenting a very interesting subject. Are there any questions by any member of the committee? Mr. Dempsey?

Mr. DEMPSEY. I see, on the whole, it has been increasing, although it has gone back at times. On the whole, since 1912, there has been a fairly steady increase of tonnage.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes. Are there any other questions, gentlemen? Mr. Merritt, we are glad to have heard you. The matter will be brought to the attention of the committee.

Mr. MERRITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a little summary here that I will leave with the clerk.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes; leave that.

(Whereupon the committee proceeded to the consideration of other business.)

(The statement referred to above is as follows:)

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D. C., January 17, 1918.

COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBORS,
House of Representatives.

SIRS: Referring to H. R. 8627, I respectfully point out that this project is one which was recommended by the engineers of the War Department in 1914. It is an enlargement of a project which was completed in July, 1911, and that project was one which enlarged an important improvement to Stamford Harbor, which was carried out by local and private enterprise.

It is also true that through private enterprise proper railway facilities have been provided for both the east and the west branch of the harbor in substantial accordance with correspondence between the Hon. John H. Smith, chairman of the Committee on Rivers and Harbors, and the Hon. Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, in October, 1917.

The last report of the Chief of Engineers shows that the water-bound commerce of Stamford for the year 1916 was over \$22,000,000. The importance of the harbor facilities needs no emphasis at the present time, not only for the sake of the locality which the particular harbor serves but also for relieving the congestion of railway carriage and thus helping an entire section and indeed the whole country.

Stamford is the first fairly commodious harbor on the west side of the Sound after leaving City Island, N. Y., and, as is pointed out by the engineers, in order to accommodate the increased size of barges which will use the enlarged Erie Canal it is essential that the depth of the channels be increased as indicated in the engineers' report.

Very respectfully,

S. MERRITT.

(The following letters were filed by Mr. Merritt with the committee on January 29, 1918:)

JANUARY 24, 1918.

HON. SCHUYLER MERRITT,

House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.

MY DEAR MR. MERRITT: I received your letter of the 22d and have had an interview with Mr. Nash this morning, at the office, and have gone over the map which he has of the East Branch of the Stamford Harbor. He is going to make a tracing of this map which will show the amount of waterfront which the city will have at the disposal station. There is about 1,000 feet of waterfront as I understand it. He says that the city has under contemplation the building of a public wharf there and there is a project under way now, which contemplates the building of a spur track running down to the Gillespie Rubber Plant, which is below the proposed disposal dock. This will afford rail communication to the city property. I asked him to write you a letter stating these facts as the city engineer, and he has agreed to give me the map and letter Friday or Saturday of this week. I will forward them to you. I think you made a very good statement to the Rivers and Harbors Committee.

We have, in our business, received spruce lumber on our wharf by vessel and transferred it to cars for shipment to New Canaan. During the past two years, we have received several cargoes of cypress lumber from the South which have been sent us at Stamford by vessel, and we have transferred it to cars and it has been shipped further east. This was done to relieve the rail congestion at Harlem River. There is no doubt in my mind but that if the increased depth was furnished Stamford, there would be a great deal of bulk freight that would come to Stamford and be forwarded by rail from here to different points in New England. Of course, you will recall the fact that during the past summer there was some \$4,000 expended by the city and the property owners on the east branch of the harbor to deepen the water from the steamboat dock north.

We have recently been asked to quote prices on material for a grain elevator to be erected in Stamford. If grain could be delivered here by water, through the New York Barge Canal, to this elevator and then reshipped by rail from Stamford, it would do a great deal for the business of Stamford and also be a great relief to the congested railroad situation.

I think later on, after the war, we will be able, with this extra water depth, to have shipments direct from the Pacific coast through the Panama Canal to Stamford, and then transfer either to scows or cars for delivery outside of Stamford. Also, when the New York Barge Canal is in commission, we may be able to receive lumber in bulk shipped from the Great Lakes on larger boats than we can now, and reship from Stamford. If this increased depth of water in the East Branch could be assured during the next two or three years, I think it would go a long way to relieve the railroad freight situation, which is certainly most acute now, and the situation has been growing worse during the past two years. In fact, at the present time, we are unable to get anybody to quote us on stock to be delivered by rail unless we can furnish them with Government order numbers.

Yours very truly,

WM. H. JUDD.

STAMFORD, CONN., January 25, 1918.

HON. SCHUYLER MERRITT,

Member House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.

DEAR MR. MERRITT: Believing it to be a patriotic, as well as an official civic duty, I am writing you briefly concerning the immediate need of harbor improvement for what is known in Government circles as the East Branch of Stamford Harbor; locally as "The Canal."

As you are probably aware, this city has recently acquired by condemnation proceedings a frontage on the easterly side of the East Branch for sewage disposal and public dock purposes; said frontage on the canal, now owned by the city, being 1,210 feet, and the area of land directly in the rear being 25 acres.

Directly south of this tract of land is the manufactory of The Stamford Rubber Supply Co., and directly north is about 1,200 lineal feet of improved

dock property, which is being actively used for various mercantile purposes, including masons' supplies, road materials, coal, lumber, hay, feed, grain, and provisions, all practically dependent on water transportation.

Railroad facilities are limited to the northerly end of this side of the canal, but it is proposed and there is under consideration at the present time, plans for the construction of a railroad southerly to the Stamford Rubber Supply Co.'s manufactory; said railroad to pass through the dock property of the city of Stamford.

The belief is that the public dock as proposed would become a terminal of no small proportions and could be made a transfer point for freight to and from other points in New England. This can not be done with any degree of certainty or satisfaction unless our harbor from Long Island Sound up to the head of the canal is deepened to give access to boats and vessels of a reasonable draft.

The City, in conjunction with dock property owners, has, during the year 1917, expended \$4,000 in digging the canal deeper at its upper end. There is now supposed to be 9 feet of water in the canal at mean low tide, but there is not.

There are two market boats alternately plying between Stamford and New York throughout the year, but they are unable to make their dock at low water and must arrange their schedules with the tides.

It would seem that a channel deepened to 12 feet at low water and of a width of 100 feet, would be the least that a city of the size of Stamford should ask for; and that opposite the Stamford Yacht Club a suitable area should be provided for the safe mooring of vessels under any condition of tide and weather.

I am sending a sketch showing a good portion of the east branch of the harbor, and am designating thereon the principal manufactories and docks in the vicinity.

I trust you may have unqualified support in the advocacy of so needed an improvement as the betterment of Stamford's harbor.

Very truly yours,

PAUL NASH,
City Engineer.





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GAYLORD

